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Abiding in Christ, Abounding in Hope

JUNE/JULY 2007

SECTION B

GOD IS STILL SPEAKING...

and Still Building in the Southeast Conference

he Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference will take place from Friday, June 8th through Saturday the 9th. Hosted by Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta, we will be exploring the ways in which we are called to build the United Church of Christ. On Friday, we will open with a leadership convocation led by John Thomas, "From Respectable Religion to Evangelical Faith," and in the afternoon, Ed Aponte, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Lancaster Theological Seminary, will lead a convocation on the impact of globalization and immigration on our ministries. Our opening worship on Friday evening will feature John Thomas as preacher, and the choir will be from Victory United Church of Christ, Stone Mountain. Worship on Saturday morning will feature Dr. Donna Allen, newly called as a professor of worship and liturgy at Lancaster Theological Seminary, the choir from Garden of Grace UCC, Columbia, SC, and a Conference-wide choir as well. Our business session on Saturday afternoon will focus on action on our significantly changed constitution and bylaws, the adoption of the budget, election of officers, and recognition of the

significant financial commitments of many of our leading congregations. In addition we wil be celebrating our new and renewing congregations. For registration, advance copies of the budgets and Constitution and Bylaws, go to the Conference web site (www.secucc.org). The Annual Report of the Conference will be posted on the website

following its acceptance at the Annual Meeting. Please remember to bring names of members of your congregation whom you wish to have remembered in the opening memorial service on Saturday morning, a tradition in the Conference of recalling the "cloud of witnesses" from our churches who have passed on over the course of the last year.

There will be other opportunities for involvement in the Annual Meeting as well. We are organizing a Conference wide choir to sing at the 9:00 morning service on Saturday, under the directorship of Mike Hughes of Garden of Grace UCC, Columbia, SC. There will be a youth program as a part of the Annual Meeting, beginning at 5:00 Friday afternoon and continuing through Saturday afternoon. The youth will attend the dinner and program at the Medieval Times on Friday evening, be a part of the worship leadership on Saturday morning, and have a service project Saturday afternoon. Registration and details will be posted on the Southeast Conference web site.







John Thomas

Ed Aponte

Donna Allen



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2007 TAP LEADERSHIP CONVOCATION

For all clergy and laity of the Southeast Conference

Join with other leaders to explore timely issues from a theological perspective.

Cost \$60 including lunch, dinner, and all materials.
(Included in the Annual Meeting registration fee of \$100.)

Register on Annual Meeting Registration Form or on-line at www.secucc.org

Child care will be available free of charge if requested in advance.

Friday, June 8, 2007

Central Congregational UCC—Atlanta, GA 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

From Respectable Religion to Evangelical Faith
The Rev. Dr. John H. Thomas
General Minister and President,
United Church of Christ

- 11:30 a.m.-12:45 p.m.
- 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
 Globalizing the Sacred: Latino/a Theologies,
 Immigration, & Biblical Justice

The Rev. Dr. Edwin Aponte Vice President of Academic Affairs, Lancaster Theological Seminary

"I WILL POUR OUT MY SPIRIT UPON ALL . . . AND YOUR YOUNG SHALL SEE VISIONS AND YOUR OLD SHALL DREAM DREAMS."

Acts 2:17

B2 JUNE/JULY 2007

... rejoicing in "the ties

that bind" us together ...



Grace to you and peace...

The month of June is a time of gatherings. The people of the Southeast Conference will gather for our Annual Meeting, June 7th through the 9th, traveling across a five state region to do the work of equipping our ministries and celebrating the covenants which have sustained us. Because our distances are so vast, our gather-

FROM THE
CONFERENCE
MINISTER

ings are more precious. This Annual Meeting promises to be special as we welcome General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, John

Thomas, and celebrate our relationship with Lancaster Theological Seminary. We will recognize the accomplishments and commitments of our local congregations and their leaders who have shaped this Conference, and begin to set in place the foundations upon which we build our future.

We gather at the end of June in Hartford for the 26th

General Synod of the United Church of Christ, a celebration of the 50th anniversary of our beloved denomination. This too will be a time of looking back and looking forward. Given the growth of the Southeast Conference our number of General Synod delegates has doubled to six, and the TAP (Theology Among the People) pro-

gram will be taking TAP participants to Synod as a part of a UCC emersion experience. We will take a delegation of youth to Hartford as well. I trust that we will end June with a sense of renewed appreciation of what it means to be United Church of Christ, and rejoicing in "the ties that

bind" us together in our Conference and with the greater church. I hope that you will be able to be with us for some of this month of covenant renewal, for you are an important part of this family of faith.

Blessings, *Tim Downs* Timothy C. Downs Conference Minister

Concerns and Celebrations

- We ask your prayers for **Dwight Andrews**, pastor of **First Congregational UCC**, **Atlanta**, and his wife, **Desiree Pedescleaux**. Desiree's sister Denise and mother Marie were found shot to death in their kitchen April 24th. They lived in Glen Oaks, LA, near Baton Rouge. Both Denise and Marie were educators, Marie was retired and Denise taught 5th grade. The funeral took place May 1st. Dwight Andrews is also recovering from surgery, which took place on April 17th, to remove a non-malignant growth from his vocal cords.
- Wanda Bain, married to Roy Bain, pastor of Lanett Congregational Christian Church, Lanett, AL, is recovering from hospitalization, during which she had two stents installed to correct blockages around her heart. Wanda is recovering well and is at home.
- Elizabeth Clement, a member of First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, was the featured preacher for Day 1, a nationally broadcast radio show. Her sermon was broadcast April 29th.
- Gary Myers, pastor of Trinity Congregational UCC, Athens, AL, and Southeast Conference delegate on the Board of Directors of Wider Church Ministries of the UCC, has been elected to the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ, and as Vice-President of the Board of WCM.
- We have received word that Marvin Morgan, formerly of The Interdenominational Theological Center, and a member of First Congregational UCC, Atlanta, is now serving on the pastoral staff of the church providing pastoral care, and is also working with a union effort to mobilize faith communities in support of workers of the Smithfield Company in North Carolina.



Gary Myers, pastor of Trinity Congregational UCC, Athens, AL

- Tom Warren, pastor of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, Pleasant Hill, TN, is now writing a regular Bible study column in the national *UCNews*.
- Will Rabert, member of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN, who has served faithfully as the Coordinator of DART (Disaster Assistance Relief Team) for the Southeast Conference for many years, has announced his retirement from this position effective the end of the summer.
- Anil and Theresa Henry, members of Brookmeade Congregational UCC, Nashville, and commissioned for ministry by the Alabama-Tennessee Association are, as many know, physicians who returned to India to operate a small rural hospital in Mungeli. Anil and Theresa will be in the Southeast Conference from August 1st through September 30th. Tim Downs will be coordinating their itinerary, seeking to have them speak to Disciples and UCC congregations as widely as possible. If you have an interest in hosting the Henrys, now is the time to sign up.
- At its meeting on April 12th, the Georgia South Carolina Association voted to recommend Leslie Raymer, a member of Virginia Highland Church (A Baptist and UCC Congregation) as ordainable pending a call to an Ecclesiastical Council of the Association. They also granted student in care status to Michelle Calderon, member of Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta. Earlier in the month they con-

firmed that they had granted student in care status to **Heidi Schuler** and **Rachel Small**, both members of **Pilgrimage UCC**, **Marietta**, **GA**, and recent graduates of Candler School of Theology.

- Darin Easler, formerly a rostered minister in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and a member at Central Congregational UCC, Atlanta, has been granted full ordained ministerial standing in the Georgia-South Carolina Association, UCC, April, 2007, effective upon his call to service with the Heartland Hospice Services of Conyers, GA.
- At its meeting on April 13th, the Alabama-Tennessee Association Church and Ministry Committee renewed the licenses for ministry for the following ministers: Dorinda Broadnax, Assistant Minister at Community Congregational UCC, Montgomery, AL; Cynthia Andrews-Looper, Pastor, Holy Trinity Community UCC, Nashville, TN; Christophe Ringer, pastor of Howard Congregational UCC, Nashville, TN; and Michael Garrett, Pastor First Congregational UCC, Montgomery, AL. They granted a license for ministry to Reginald Holloway, recently called as pastor of First Congregational UCC, Talladega, AL. The Committee also reactivated the ministerial standing of Craig Hendrix, a member of Church of the Savior, Knoxville, TN.
- We received word that **Lilton Marks**, a member of **First Congregational UCC**, **Atlanta**, retired from Army chaplaincy on April 20th, after 42 years of active and reserved duty. Lilton recently returned from Iraq, were he served as command chaplain for the Army.
- Hazel O'Leary, President of Fisk University has agreed to host a video produced by the Council of Higher Education of the UCC featuring the relationship between the American Missionary Association schools and colleges and the United Church of Christ
- Joyce Hollyday, formerly an Associate Conference Minister of the Southeast Conference, and Walter Brueggemann, retired from Columbia Theological Seminary, will lead a Summer Scholars Program, July 23-25 entitled "Good News of Regime Change: An Invitation to the Contemporary Church" at Columbia in Decatur, GA. Registration information is available at www.ctsnet.edu.

For additional information on any articles or activities, contact Tim Downs at tdowns@secucc.org or call the conference office at (404) 607-1993, or outside the Atlanta area at (800) 807-1993.

ADICES & AISIONS

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Article ideas and submissions may be directed to the Conference Office

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June/July 2007

Conference News & Announcements

As we prepare for the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference, we alert you to some essential facts:

- All authorized ministers of the Conference and elected delegates from local congregations comprise the voting membership of the meeting. We urge those who are members to be a part of our Annual Meeting by registering in advance. You can register by going to the Conference web site and downloading the registration form and either faxing or mailing it to the Conference office.
- Please take time to acquaint yourself with both the Proposed Constitution and Bylaws of the Southeast Conference and the proposed 2007 budget of the Conference which are both available on the web site.
- We will have a youth program during the Annual Meeting, which will include a dinner and program at Medieval Times on Friday evening, participation in Saturday worship, and a service project. All of this for only \$20.00!

■ Saturday worship at the Annual Meeting will include a Conference choir, to which all who love to sing are invited! The anthem will be "Total Praise" as arranged by Williamson, and there will be rehearsals at 9:15 Friday evening, following opening worship, and again at 8:30 Saturday morning before the service. If you are interested, contact the Conference office.

There will be two TAP (Theology Among the People) classes celebrating their graduation on Thursday evening, June 7th. One is from Midway Congregational UCC, Midway, GA, and the other from Victory UCC, Stone Mountain, GA. Certificates will be distributed by Dr. John Thomas, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, and the preacher at the worship service following the graduation banquet and ceremony will be Conference Minister Tim Downs.



The GA/SC Association meeting was hosted at Circular Congregational Church in Charleston, SC.

April 13-14, hosted by Community Congregational UCC. The theme "Ready, Set, Grow" was developed through the offering of a workshop led by United Church, Huntsville leaders on effective advertising for a congregation, and by a key note by Cameron Trimble, Associate Conference Minister for Church Development, in which she encouraged churches to take risks to extend their ministries. The Conference also distributed demographic information on each congregation in the Association to assist them with planning their outreach. The Association elected a slate of officers, including their new moderator Nancy Sales, a member of Beloved Community UCC and First Congregational Christian UCC of Birmingham. The Association also held an Ecclesiastical Council at which they approved Christy Bonner, a member of Brookmeade Congregational UCC for ordination. Christy will be accepting a call to serve as a

The Alabama-Tennessee Association held

its Annual Meeting in Montgomery, AL,

hospice chaplain in Chattanooga.

The Georgia South Carolina Association held its Annual Meeting in Charleston, SC, April 27-28, hosted by Circular Congregational Church. The theme of the meeting "Still in Solidarity, One in Christ" honors the fact that the NAACP has called for a boycott of South Carolina for seven years, to protest the flying of the Confederate flag at the state house. The meeting was organized in consultation with officials of the NAACP. Members of Circular Congregational Church opened their homes to delegates and visitors to the Annual Meeting to honor the boycott, and minority businesses were retained for catering and services. The Association held an Ecclesiastical Council to receive Sankofa UCC, a three year old church in Atlanta that is intentionally Afro-Centric in its theology, structure, mission and worship, as a congregation of the United Church of Christ. The co-pastors of Sankofa are Derrick Rice and Susan Mitchell. Worship featured singers and story tellers of the Gullah tradition, as well as a moving reflection by Susan Mitchell and Kim Buchanan around issues of racial justice.

For additional information on any articles or activities, contact Tim Downs at tdowns@secucc.org or call the conference office at (404) 607-1993, or outside the Atlanta area at (800) 807-1993.

Who Is Your Neighbor?

Someone once said, "Everyone gets somewhere in life — the rare person gets somewhere on purpose." We want to have churches in the Southeast Conference that "get somewhere on purpose" by



living out God's call and vision for their community. A big part of vision has to do with knowing the people around your church — vision must be grounded in the reality of your demographic community. The mission and ministries of your congregation work best when they are in alignment with the needs, hopes, and dreams of the people living within driving distance of your church. If you do not know who those people are, or what they need in a church, you face a daunting challenge.

Who is your neighbor? Today we have the luxury of a helpful demographic tool called PERCEPT to help us answer this question. PERCEPT is a demographic company that specializes in providing churches and denominations with the latest demographic research of your communities. The Southeast Conference pays a significant fee every year to provide your church access to this information, and we hope that you will use it.

To start, we have run a "First View Report" and sent it to all of the churches in the Southeast Conference. This is a starting place for better understanding your context and gives you some ideas for potential ministries your church might consider starting to reach people within your community. More detailed reports are available by contacting the conference office. Let us stress that the "First View Reports" are starting places that should be combined with neighborhood canvassing. Because you may have questions about your report, Cameron has scheduled a conference-wide conference call on May 15th from 7-9pm EST. Simply call 888-776-3766 and then dial *4003129*, preceded and followed by the star (*) key. Cameron will be available to talk with you about your report.

Additional demographic tools can be found at http://www.link2lead.com. Email Rev. Cameron Trimble at ctrimble@secucc.org for the access codes.

We have learned over many years of church growth and decline that vital churches are culturally relevant churches. They are churches that understand and speak to the real hopes, dreams, pains and fears of their people, proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ in ways that change the lives of those who attend. Who is your neighbor? What are their needs? Where is their hope? What do they fear? How can your church welcome them?

Conference Calls with Cameron

Being a conference that is a described as a "geographically dispersed, small membership conference," we are challenged to stay connected to one another while also serving in our various ministry settings. Our conference covers five and a half states with 49 churches scattered throughout that vast territory. Yet each one of us in our various setting is learning insights into "best practices" and gaining exposure to helpful resources that could benefit

Each one of us has some insight that might benefit another our task is to share



all our of leaders in the SEC. Talking to one another in this age of innovation is more important now than ever. Thankfully, technology can help us connect.

Every quarter, I will be hosting a "Conference Call with Cameron." My hope for this forum is to connect with one another, brainstorm new ideas in ministry, and support one another in challenges we may be facing in our settings. Each one of us has some insight that might benefit another — our task is to share.

Our first "Conference Call with Cameron" will be on **May 15th** from 7-9pm EST. Simply call 888-776-3766 and then dial *4003129*, preceded and followed by the star (*) key. Rev. Alan Roof, a consultant for Still Speaking and church development, and I will be available to talk about ways that we can more effectively connect with people in our communities (based upon your demographic reports).

I encourage your church to participate in these discussions. If you have any questions about how to be a part of these Conference calls, or if you have suggestions for topics you wish us to cover, please be in touch with me. I look forward to talking with you.

JUNE/JULY 2007



TAP Graduates are "Still Building" the Body of Christ

In the Southeast Conference, where God is "Still Speaking," we are also "Still Building" the Body of Christ by equipping the saints for ministry through the Theology Among the People (TAP) program. The Annual Meeting of the Conference, hosted by Central Congregational UCC in Atlanta, will begin with a celebration of the TAP program and a Commencement service honoring this year's graduates on Thursday, June 7th. A banquet for all TAP members will begin at 6:00 p.m. and will feature special guest, Dr. Edwin Aponte, Academic Dean of Lancaster Theological Seminary. Worship will begin at 7:30 p.m. in which members from Midway Congregational Church in Midway, Georgia; Victory Church in Stone Mountain, Georgia; and First Congregational and Community Churches in Montgomery, Alabama will be recognized for successfully completing a three year course of study in theological reflection, biblical interpretation, and the practices of ministry. The Rev. Dr. John Thomas, President and General Minister of the United Church of Christ, will be on hand to address the graduates and confer their Certificates of Completion. The Rev. Dr. Timothy C. Downs, Conference Minister of the Southeast Conference, will serve as the preacher for this event. All are invited to attend the worship service.

"TAP is an important ministry of leader development in our Conference and is recognized around the country as one of the premier programs of lay theological education," said Kathy Clark, Associate Conference Minister and Director of the program. Its innovative approach of bringing theology into the midst of the people gives lay women and men the opportunity to engage with issues of their faith at a deep level of reflection and integration within a supportive community of learners. TAP is modeled after a program of theological education by extension created by Rev. Dick Sales in southern Africa and brought to the Southeast Conference almost ten years ago. Since then, over 100 people have participated in TAP. This year's Honorees will be the third graduating class in the history of the program in the Southeast Conference.

Currently there are groups meeting in Beachton, Georgia; Midway, Georgia; Roswell, Georgia; Stone Mountain, Georgia; Pleasant Hill, Tennessee; Nashville, Tennessee; and Columbia, South Carolina. More than 60 participants are involved. Graduates and participants represent a cross section of leaders within local congregations, Associations, the Conference and the national setting of the UCC, including members of the Southeast Conference Board of Directors, Association Church and Ministry Committees, and representatives to the Boards of the Covenanted Ministries of the UCC. Others serve as Sunday school teachers and directors, peace and justice advocates, worship leaders, supply preachers, evangelists, and community leaders, just to name a few areas of service.

'TAP participants are among the women and men who are participants has left a mark on my life."

For more information or to explore starting a TAP group in your area, visit the Southeast Conference website at www.secucc.org or email Kathy Clark at kclark@secucc.org.

building up the church in our midst. It is a privilege to share in their faith journeys, to be challenged and inspired by them," says Clark. "TAP is a place where true mutual teaching and learning takes place. I am grateful for the ways each of the

SEC Board Meeting Notes from April 2007

Highlights from the SEC Board of Directors

The Treasurer's Report highlighted the fact that while income as a whole is strong, OCWM Basic Support is behind where it stood at this time last year. We were encouraged to speak to our congregations about giving monthly or quarterly to spare the Conference from the "feast or famine" unevenness of cash flow through the year.

The money received from the sale of First Congregational Church, Chattanooga has been distributed in a 60/40% split between Fisk University and the Southeast Conference.

The Stewardship and Finance Committee reported that they have carefully considered the merits of moving the Annual Meeting of the Conference to the Fall and they would like to raise this possibility at the upcoming Conference Annual Meeting.

There has been a strong and enthusiastic response to recruitment of participation in the Annual Regional Stewardship Event, to be held at St. Simon's Island, GA in May. It is the hope of the Stewardship and Finance Committee to use this event as a point from which to launch a greater stewardship initiative in the Conference to equip our congregations to be more effective in stewardship development and promotion.

The Board received the recommendations of the visioning retreat to proceed with the next step of a capital campaign, the purpose of which will be to "empower and equip visionary leaders ... to build vital faith communities in the United Church of Christ.'

The Board received a report from the Executive Council of the United Church of Christ which affirmed the recommendations of the Boards of Directors of Florida, South Central, and Southeast Conferences around the clarification of the boundaries between them. The Southeast Conference will include the panhandle of Florida west of the Apalachicola River, and all of Mississippi except the coastal area around I-10.

The Board welcomed Dorinda Broadnax as a member in light of her election to the Executive Council of the UCC representing the Southeast Conference.

The Board directed Tim Downs to draft a letter to the judicatory heads of all the denominations with whom we are in full communion, inviting them to the Annual Meeting of the Southeast Conference. These would include the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, The Presbyterian Church (USA), and the Reformed Church of America.

There was a recommendation that the Board organize a Task Force on Women in Church and Society.

The Bylaws Committee of the Conference submitted the

current draft of the Provisional Constitution and Bylaws of the Conference. They are being submitted to an attorney for review and minor adjustments are being made to clarify their intent where needed. They will be submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Conference for final ratification.

The Personnel Committee, which is currently comprised of Chair, Wayde Washburn (Pastor of Sandy Creek UCC, Lafayette, AL), Ann Schoup (member of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN), Lyle Weible (member of Pleasant Hill Community UCC, TN), Rodney Franklin (pastor of First Congregational Christian UCC, Birmingham), is welcoming Becky Myers Spencer (member of First Congregational UCC, Atlanta) onto the Committee. They are rewriting the Personnel Policies of the Conference, and refining the process of evaluating employees following our experience in the 2006 evaluations.

The TAP Advisory Committee announced that there has been a new TAP group organized at Garden of Grace UCC, Columbia, SC

The New Church Development Advisory Committee announced that three prospective new church pastors have been through an intensive training, one of whom is already in place (Susannah Davis of Kirkwood UCC, Kirkwood, GA). They have a full schedule of Leadership Development Events through the year, and an intensive training for new church pastor co-sponsored with the national setting in August.

The Youth Task Force is actively recruiting youth participation in General Synod and seeking to recruit participation in the Mission Event and the Annual Meeting of the Conference. For more information, contact Tim Downs.

We have received a list of the officially Open and Affirming congregations in the Southeast Conference. Of 48 congregations, 15 are ONA, or 31%. They are:

Beloved Community UCC Birmingham, AL Pilgrim Congregational UCC Birmingham, AL Central Congregational UCC Atlanta, GA Virginia-Highland Church Atlanta, GA Pilgrimage UCC Marietta, GA Church of the Savior Roswell, GA Circular Congregational UCC Charleston, SC Columbia, SC Garden of Grace UCC Pilgrim Congregational UCC Chattanooga, TN United Church of Cookeville, UCC Cookeville, TN Grace UCC Crossville, TN Church of the Savior UCC Knoxville, TN Brookmeade Congregational UCC Nashville, TN Holy Trinity Community UCC Nashville, TN Pleasant Hill Community UCC Pleasant Hill, TN

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Mark your calendars with events of importance to you and your congrega-

May 1, 2007

Southeast Conference Nominating Committee Conference call

May 2

Southeast Conference Staff Meeting Conference Office, Atlanta

Nehemiah Initiative Planning Committee Conference Call

Day of Prayer for the GLBT Community Virginia Highland Church (A Baptist and UCC Congregation)

May 4

Georgia South Carolina Association Church and Ministry Sub-committee Conference Office, Atlanta

May 5

Alabama-Tennessee Association **Executive Committee** United Church, UCC, Huntsville, AL

May Q

Annual Meeting Worship Planning Victory UCC TAP (Theology Among the People) Class Conference Office, Atlanta

May 11-12

Leadership Development Workshop-New Ideas in Youth Ministry K. Vaughn Conference Office, 1st Floor, Atlanta

Southeast Conference Youth Task Force Conference Office, Atlanta

May 14

Alliance of Baptist-Disciples of Christ-**UCC Partnership Committee** UCC Headquarters, Cleveland, OH

May 15-17

Cabinet of Council of Conference Ministers UCC Headquarters, Cleveland OH

Southeast Conference UCC New Church **Development Advisory Committee** Conference Call

May 19

Southeast Conference Staff Meeting Conference Office, Atlanta

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